

# Sousa Mendes Foundation

...preserving the legacy of Aristides de Sousa Mendes...

*Aristides de Sousa Mendes*



The signature and stamp pictured above meant the difference between life and death to an estimated 30,000 refugees from Nazi-occupied territory in 1939 and 1940. These people were saved only because of the courage, faith and civil disobedience of Aristides de Sousa Mendes, the Portuguese Consul General in Bordeaux. An international team from the Sousa Mendes Foundation is making a concerted effort to identify as many of these people and their descendants as possible in order to preserve important historical data and to educate the public, as well as to honor the courage of a diplomat who never expected to hold the destiny of so many people in his hands.

We invite you to visit the website of the US-based Sousa Mendes Foundation to see the list of nearly 3,000 names currently in our database. What you will find is far more than a database. After identifying the names, our team mounts a search for surviving family members and collects artifacts, photos, and testimonials to be used in creating a family page for each group. Each story is different – some end sadly, some in triumph; some of the names are well known, and others are just everyday people running for their lives.

The team compares data from refugee lists and ship passenger lists, and seeks to put a face to every name. Each document adds a new piece to the puzzle. Below is one such document – the denial of visas to dozens of refugees – that generated new research by the team and gave rise to new and rich family pages.

This telegram from Salazar to Sousa Mendes, dated June 8, 1940, denies visas to more than thirty refugees. The Sousa Mendes Foundation research team established the identities of many of these families and determined that Sousa Mendes granted them visas, in defiance of this telegram.

1694 DE CCh No 31

MINISTÉRIO DOS NEGÓCIOS ESTRANGEIROS  
República da Administração Consular

TELEGRAMA EXPEDIDO

Para a Embaixada de Portugal em Bordéus  
o Legação Consulado

Ostenso e Cifrado em 8 de VI de 1940

Recusados visados: Stultjens, Lebrun e esposa, Dütjens, Linster, M<sup>me</sup> Silverans e filha, Hollander e esposa com um filho, Kohn e esposa e dois filhos, Schmitz, Jirschowitz, Moses Landau e genro Wechter, M<sup>me</sup> Tannenbaum, Bonard e M<sup>me</sup> Bessart, Meyers e esposa, Hertog Eildaner e esposa, May e família, O'Brien, Bacalini, Fridberg esposa e mãe, Quittnerova.

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Cópia à Repartição competente em 15-6-40 - Ad. Consular

document courtesy Rui Afonso

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